

THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

Hegel and Hegelianism

By

R. Mackintosh, D.D.

*Professor of Apologetics in Lanchester Independent College
Manchester*

AUTHOR OF "FROM COMEY TO BENJAMIN KIDD"



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PREFACE

To write shortly upon Hegelianism has proved even more extraordinarily difficult in accomplishment than it seemed in prospect; and much that had been set down for discussion, especially towards the end, has been crowded out. It was necessary for this series and for this writer to discuss Hegel from a point of view accessible to all who are interested in "the world's epoch-makers"; yet in breaking off the author feels with regret that many a matter has been left unexplained which must prove a stone of stumbling to the beginner. Within this little book such a reader may find some measure of help from the Index. He may further be recommended to study the notes upon Hegel's phraseology at the end of the prolegomena to Dr. Wallace's translation of the *Logic*. Among many other serviceable books, Dr. E. Caird's short volume, *Hegel*—by a master in philosophy and especially in Hegelianism—stands pre-eminent. Half of it is biographical. The other half confines itself to stating and enforcing, with much sympathy, Hegel's

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central point of view. For that among other reasons it seemed best that the present handbook should attempt an outline of the various portions of the system. The Chicago handbooks edited by Dr. Morris will be found of great service in pursuing further study of Hegel's detail. But no magic can make Hegel an easy author; and no helps, however efficient, ought to be used as substitutes for personal knowledge of the master mind.¹

¹ In the literature at the head of several chapters, it will be observed that (A) stands for translations; (B) for untranslated and relevant portions of Hegel's writings; (C) for helpful works in English on the subjects under discussion, or works influenced strongly by Hegel.

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HEGEL AND HEGELIANISM

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

PHILOSOPHY is often described as a doctrine of the Absolute. It is not indeed specially characteristic of Hegel to use such a definition. He prefers to speak of the Idea. For Hegel is upon his own showing an idealist, and an absolute idealist. When we have dealt with his system in detail, particularly with what he calls Logic, we shall find ourselves, or ought to find ourselves, better able to appreciate the motives of his terminology. Still, the difference in words does not imply a difference in subject or topic. Like other philosophies, Hegel's might also be called a doctrine of the Absolute. He ends his expositions in the region of "absolute knowledge" or "the absolute idea."

This sounds somewhat abstract and aloof from everyday life. It may be said at the outset that Hegel's philosophy less than any other stands aloof from reality or aspires to a construction *in vacuo*. We may very possibly blame him for being unduly entangled in the realities of ordinary experience; we cannot fairly charge

him with disparaging them. And if we are allowed to translate the word Absolute by a less pretentious equivalent, we may be helped to repel the unfair suspicions spoken of. The doctrine of the Absolute is a doctrine of *reality*. Whatever is real—in or below the half-deceptive appearances of things—through or behind the “phenomena” of ordinary experience or of the physical universe—that is the object of the philosopher’s quest.

He is not the only teacher of mankind who seeks reality. Every teacher who deserves respect has the same high ambition somehow ruling in him. Yet in certain respects the philosopher stands alone. He is pledged to thoroughness, and tries to push inquiry further than it is carried by others, e.g. by the physical sciences. Properly, of course, the word “science” simply means knowledge; it is by a conventional use of language that we restrict the word, as we ordinarily do, to specialised knowledge in a single department. When Hegel uses the German word for science—*Wissenschaft*—there is no corresponding restriction. And is not Hegel justified? If partial knowledge ought to be studied, is there not room for one who shall cultivate knowledge as a whole? Knowledge as a whole, or reality as a whole—we may use either form of words without change of meaning; or are we prepared to fall back upon the despised groping of the Platonic dialogues, and suppose that one kind of knowledge deals not with reality but with the unreal? It is more fashionable nowadays to suppose that a reality exists with which knowledge cannot enter into any relation. Whether this is wiser than the other one-sidedness may be questioned. Hegel will vigorously deny its wisdom.

The philosopher, then, studying knowledge or reality as a whole, will inquire whether there are assumptions made by the special sciences—what these are—within what limits they hold good. This is no part of the work of special science. So long as in practice it respects its proper limits—and it usually though not always succeeds in doing that—a special science may live and do good service without ever being distinctly conscious of the qualifications which ought to be understood when its results are stated. Knowledge is like a sum in arithmetic worked out to several points of decimals. The special science is a schoolboy who usually is content to get two or three decimal figures and then stop. If he is in an ambitious mood, however, he will work to twenty or thirty figures—going far beyond what his data warrant. Philosophy claims to be an expert, carrying the sum exactly as far as it ought to go, and knowing precisely why the calculation has to stop at a particular figure.

It may still be doubted whether we shall gain anything by discussing the absolute reality in abstract terms. Are there not many kinds of reality which have nothing to do with each other? Here we notice another of the peculiarities of Hegel. He is a monist. He does not believe in different kinds of reality, so distinct that we cannot bring them together. Being an idealist, he affirms that the nature of thought or of knowledge gives us our most reliable clue to the nature of reality; and his friends may further argue that two wholly distinct realities, if they came to be known, would rend the unity of consciousness. For good or for evil, Hegel defines reality (and thought) in the abstract. And the conceptions of the Real which he

builds up in his *Logic* he carries with him when he proposes to expound special aspects of the known Reality, as in nature, or as in Aesthetics or Ethics or Religion. Dualism is repudiated and protested against; at the same time, duality—in subordination to unity, and as a means of manifesting or realising unity—is asserted everywhere.

The great man who presented these thoughts on the boldest scale to the modern world—or indeed to any period of the world's history, ancient or modern—has little purely biographical interest attaching to his life and character. Even when he is caught up in the current of notable and tragic events even when Napoleon wins a battle within sight of the philosopher's study and within earshot of his lecture room—the thing is accidental and external to him. Its effects cannot modify though they may perplex or delay his true development. In the history of a thinker the landmarks are ideas; his boldest and most thrilling deeds are books or lectures. What is true of thinkers in contrast to men of action is pre-eminently true of Hegel among all the race of thinkers. He seeks to reduce reality not merely to the form of subjectivity as thought, but to the form of intellect as logical thought. Knowledge on his view grasps the Absolute; nothing eludes knowledge. Goodness and beauty are existences to which the principles of knowledge or of thought afford a clue; and the supreme interest of beauty and goodness is to afford help in the development of intelligence. We believe, therefore, that we shall do most justice to our subject by dealing mainly with Hegelianism, mentioning as regards Hegel only what may afford a chronology of his works and make his position intel-

legible—so far as one can do this in a compend—when we compare him with his predecessors and with his principal British disciples. Even during his life his idiosyncrasy counted for little. Other men have swayed their time by the charm or the force of their personality; Hegel's overmastering desire was to be an impersonal servant of the Idea—in more familiar language, a servant of [abstract] truth. It was indeed Hegel's belief that no one in effect achieves more or achieves less than what his thoughts entitle him to. Form on ultimate analysis appears to be part of the content; that favourite distinction melts, like all others, in the Hegelian laboratory. When the same thoughts are held to move society differently as interpreted by a different character, Hegel judges that they are not the same, but modified in exact proportion to the difference in their effects. An "edifying" philosophy was his pet aversion; and we may safely say that no man ever handled such lofty themes in so consistently and coldly scientific a spirit. We never feel the beat of a heart in his writings—only the pulse of thought. A manual of the Differential Calculus will appear a warm and sentimental treatise when compared with the merciless pages in which Hegel anatomises the soul of man or the nature of the Blessed God. Nothing that he has said will, by the manner of his saying it, make any one the braver for reading it or the better for remembering it. The philosopher has almost if not altogether eaten out the man. Thus, if much of what we say seems to deal with philosophy rather than with Hegelianism or with Hegel, let us remember that Hegel is the philosopher *par excellence*—the man interested in truth, in all truth, in nothing but truth, or

interested in other experiences simply as phases in the intellectual search for truth. Moreover, Hegelianism is certainly not yet a dead doctrine or a spent force. We are not building a cenotaph in honour of one great man. We are introducing the reader to a fortress of thought, now perhaps somewhat decayed, or at least reported to be so, but still inhabited by living men and hard fighters.

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARY OUTLINE

WHAT is stated here must be regarded as purely provisional. It does not follow the line of any of Hegel's own statements, and, if accepted, must be taken upon trust. It is an effort to express the leading thoughts of Hegel so as to make them, if not intelligible, yet somewhat less unintelligible to the beginner.

We shall treat his main positions as a progressively unfolded doctrine of the Absolute. Or, to use less alarming language, we shall regard them as progressive definitions of the nature of what is real. We throw to the front a belief which we regard as deeply characteristic of Hegel, namely,

I. Reality is a system. We might approach the same thought by saying that reality is conceived as a unity—or that there is a unity divined in all existence. That is indeed a belief characteristic of Hegel, but it seems well from the very first to emphasise his opposition to Pantheism of the ordinary type. Ordinary pantheists hold unity to be important and difference trivial; they regard unity as an objective fact, but difference as a mere human fiction. It is not so with Hegel. To him, existence is necessarily revealed not simply as a unity, but as a unity of distinguished and

related parts—in short, as a system. We may add that reality is interpreted as a system of the highest kind—an organism and more than an organism. The whole is believed to imply every part, and every part is believed to imply the whole. Or, again—more briefly, if less significantly—every part implies every other part.

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

This is very far from our ordinary common sense way of conceiving reality, and it may be asked how Hegel dares to make such an assumption. He is not greatly concerned to justify himself to the startled beginner. He lived in an age of proud idealist speculations, and was more interested in comparing his own type of philosophy with rival systems, than in laying bare to the plain man the approaches to wisdom. One answer indeed he offers, but a formidable one; he tells us that the final justification of his system is to be found by working through it as a whole. If you will (and can) follow him, he will show you a place for everything, and everything in its place, and he will show you that each pigeonhole *must* be added in its turn to round off those which have gone before. And surely this answer is sufficient, if it be true; but it is not available for a preliminary survey. In anticipation of fuller epitomes yet to be given, we may say that it is unquestionably from the nature of *Thought* Hegel derives his belief in the systematic character of the Real. "To think," said Sir William Hamilton, "is to condition, to relate"—a

description of thought which Hamilton seemed to regard as seriously damaging the pretensions of thought to represent reality. But why? Why must we assume that reality is a contingent plurality rather than a systematic unity? Above all, why should we do so when our own thought forces us in the opposite direction? Its relating activity, if finished, must give us a system of absolute and complete determination, such as Hegel affirms that we already can recognise in the nature of reality. If our minds necessarily evolve certain beliefs when engaged in their task of thinking—if, *e.g.*, they compel us to regard reality as a system, or else to abandon cognition altogether—is not that a full proof of the validity of such belief? Do not considerations like these establish the thesis with which we are dealing?

Even physical science drops hints of a similar bearing. Has not the spectroscope proved that in distant stars—where Mill thought it highly questionable whether two and two would not make five—the same chemical elements are at work which we know in our laboratories? Thus already *a posteriori* science verifies the assumption of unity and reason even in the material cosmos.

A favourite example with Hegel himself is that of the magnet. If we approach its study with mechanical prejudices in our minds, we shall assume that the magnet is due to composition, and we may propose to break it in two and divide it, one of us keeping the north pole and one the south. But the magnet, material as it is, refuses to be thus divided into constituent fragments. Each portion is a whole; each turns out to possess both a north pole and a south

The question between Hegel and his adversaries may be formulated thus—*which is the truer type of the constitution of the real universe, a heap of stones or a magnet?*¹ Or—to go one step further—a heap of stones, or a living organism? Or—again a step further—matter, or thought?

For it is not to be supposed that Hegel is mainly occupied with the material universe. His *Encyclopedia* is, or seems to be, divided into three regions—a world of thought (Logic); a world of reality, in some sense or other estranged from thought (Nature), and a world of reality consciously penetrated by thought (Spirit). That division, however, is characteristically hard and obscure, and a learner will be wise to postpone his study of it until a later stage. It is more important now to understand in general terms that the system of reality to which Hegel points us is absolute and all-inclusive. God, if He exists, must be placed in it, or, better perhaps, must be revealed through it. To be aloof from it would be to fall out of reality altogether. Hegel might have adopted the phrase with which the Agnostic young lady once startled the author of *The Epic of Hudson*—"There is nowhere else." Positively, this all-inclusive sweep of the system of reality implies that Hegel must find a place within it for the spiritual interests of mankind. Morality and religion must be parts of reality, no less than matter or force. This is the moving interest in the case of the more earnest minds who adhere to

¹This is not the only nor the main reason why Hegel's "Notion" has sometimes been rendered "Polarity." The *opposition* (in unity) of pole and pole is a still more precious parable in the opinion of Hegel's disciples.

the Hegelian system—men like the late T. H. Green. They believe that, in defending the reality of ordinary knowledge, or the trustworthiness of thought, they are helping to fight the one great battle of belief against the spirit of denial. In the English-speaking world, we are accustomed to alliances between an Agnostic philosophy and a religious faith. It is important to have the opposite view thrust even sharply on our notice. It is well to remind ourselves that there are capable thinkers who regard any such alliance as a piece of intellectual cowardice, or a covert treason.

In the sense in which we have explained it, and as understood by Hegel, reality is not something aloof from thought, but (to say no more) includes in itself the great determinations or categories by which the human mind grasps its knowledge—these also are realities. Hence we may profitably regard Hegel's view of reality as an extension of Kant's view of thought. So far as Kant furnished a positive refutation of Hume's positions, we may say that it consisted in one special point. Hume had practically affirmed that sequence was a reality, while causation was nothing but a subjective fiction, the fruit of association. Kant showed—by a new mode of treatment involving a deeper analysis of subjectivity—that it was impossible to explain the *consciousness* of sequence without implying a *consciousness* (explicit or implicit) of that ideal bond of union between sequent phenomena which we know as the law of causation. Apart from that, Kant showed, human knowledge would be a rope of sand. A conscious series must be more than a series. It rests on a unity—subjectively, the unity of the

conscious Self; objectively, the unity of causal processes reciprocally determining each other. (Thus, be it noted, the unity, even according to Kant, develops into a sort of system.) Accordingly, human knowledge is revealed as a web of necessary relations. Sequence and necessary causal connexion, things which treated objectively seem to be totally different assertions, turn out to be nothing else than different sides of the same set of facts when we study them by the new methods of the Critical Philosophy. The natural result is that, if we believe in sequence, we must also believe in causation. In Kant this position is evacuated of meaning by the deeper and subtler agnosticism which he puts in the place of Hume's; but Hegel bids us be in earnest with Kant's result. The difference between Kant's and Hegel's ideas of system appears further when we pass on to higher determinations of outward reality than *mechanism*. According to Kant, we cannot study *organisms* without conceiving them as unities moulded by [purpose, or] "final cause." Every plant or animal is an end to itself. It persists as a unity through changes—seeking its own continuance and the continuance of its species. It is something quite different from a mechanical compound of parts. But Kant thinks we must bear in mind that we have not such support for our ideas of teleological nature as for our ideas of mechanism.¹ The mechanical sequence of natural phenomena is the *alter ego* of human self-consciousness; teleological nature is an

¹ It is incomprehensible that Tennyson's "Flower in the crannied wall" should ever be found quoted in relation to Kant's limited world of mechanisms. Dr. E. Caird quotes it as we have done (*Hegel*, p. 180).

PRELIMINARY OUTLINE

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unverified shadow of mind somehow projected into the world of mechanism.

“God might have made the earth bring forth
Enough for great and small,
[The oak tree and the cedar tree,]
Without a flower at all!”

It lies in the very nature of things that, if we are to be conscious of sequence, we must recognise causation. It does not lie in the nature of things that, if we are ourselves to be conscious or self-conscious beings, we should discover organisms as well as mechanisms around us. They are, as Mr. Gladstone styled Parnell's contribution to the Kilmainham treaty, a *hors d'œuvre*. They are a fifth wheel to nature's coach. In contrast with these views of Kant's, Hegel seeks (by methods which we shall presently indicate) to verify *all* the principal categories of human thought as being bound up with the simplest exercise of self-consciousness. Meantime let us notice some features of this idea of system.

First, the idea, if it can be vindicated, offers the highest kind of verification for each particular thought. Empiricism rests every truth on the authority of some one fact of experience or some collection of such facts. Intuitionism appeals to the sense of subjective necessity—strong for those in whom it exists—powerless to convince others, and attaching to hallucinations as strongly as to the axioms of mathematics or the elementary truths of morals. Idealism, on the contrary, appeals to the coherence of the whole. Every part supports every other part. If you think at all, you must accept whatever is shown to be involved in the connected system of the great thought of reality.

Secondly, the idea is not overfavourable to belief in Free Will. The case is not perfectly clear. We shall argue hereafter that Hegel's thoughts leave room for Libertarianism; but his British followers have gone strongly against it; and we cannot deny that, in support of their choice, they may plausibly appeal to this master thought or deep foundation of the Hegelian philosophy, the thought of a connected system.

Thirdly, the idea is favourable to optimism. All is of one piece, and "the whole is good," as the author of *Graveyard* used to insist.¹ It perplexes one to observe how effortless the optimism of a good Hegelian appears. He might say with an optimist of a very different school, Walt Whitman, "No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death." To the strength of his logic—his mere logic—tears and blood and sins are negligible quantities.

Fourthly, the idea if strictly interpreted is fatal to the idea of Supernatural Revelation; *there is nowhere else*. We do not assert that it is fatal to belief in Divine personality. On that great question as on many others, Hegel himself seems to be ambiguous, and his followers may plausibly claim support from him for opposite conclusions. But he is more plainly hostile to the idea of revelation or redemption. The idea of system, as he states it and works it out, seems to involve a colossal and remorseless naturalism (of reason, not of matter), which is totally incompatible with any form of the Christian Church's faith in Jesus Christ. Hegel himself perhaps veils this conclusion, at least for the most part; but we agree with his distinguished student, Dr. E. Caird, in holding that

¹ The phrase is at least as old as Rousseau.

Hegel's principles in regard to religion involve conclusions beyond those generally recognised, or—perhaps—generally contained, in his utterances. But to this point we return later.

Having said so much, it may be well to add that the present writer regards this conception of system as the deepest, the most suggestive, and probably the most solid thing in Hegel. All metaphysics—i.e. all sustained thinking in its ultimate phases—brings us face to face with some such conception of reality. If there are limits to the possibility of maintaining or developing the thought in question, these are limits to human reason. Instead of asking whether such an affirmation be true to fact, we must rather ask, In what sense it is true? or, under what limits?

II. Reality is a graded system.

So far we have learned that, in the system of reality, as conceived by Hegel, all parts are justified. For all are needed; they are all integral, organic. We must now add that all are not equally important. While they are *alike* justified, they are not perhaps justified *in equal measure*. They stand to each other in relation of superiority and inferiority. In the *Logic*, this grouping refers to different thoughts;—though we must remember that, even in the *Logic*, the thoughts refer to reality; they are definitions of the Real (constituting together somehow one great definition). In the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, the grouping refers explicitly to different phases of objective reality. In the two latter, the meaning *seems*—perhaps only from custom—more readily intelligible. It is the grouping of the *Logic*, however, which Professor Andrew Seth seems to have

in view when he praises the grading of categories as Hegel's greatest achievement. Dr. Seth's able pupil, Dr. Mellone, concurring with him. Primarily, such grading seems to imply that the earlier definitions of reality vanish as false or inadequate, while the later ones—or possibly only the very latest of all—hold the field as adequate to the facts. Reality is not bare being in the abstract; reality is "the Notion" or "the Idea"—i.e. reality is a grand coherent system of unity preserved in and fulfilled through differences. We are confirmed in supposing that Hegel takes this view, according to which lower "categories," once seen to be lower, are done with, when we learn that the earlier categories are represented by their successors. Their life-blood passes into their conquerors; they live on, transmuted into higher forms of life. Why then secure them a separate existence at all, even at an inferior grade? Plainly, they may apply in a special sense to a *part* of the real. There may be a section or department of reality within which they are peculiarly appropriate. We find, accordingly, that in the world of our knowledge and experience, mechanism survives alongside of teleology, and the chemical substance alongside of the psychical or ideal subject. Part of Hegel's wisdom is to point out that we ought to apply mechanical or chemical categories to appropriate phenomena, while passing to higher categories for teleological or spiritual facts. Concurrently with this, however, we must keep in mind that, according to Hegel, not the smallest fragment of reality can be finally or fully explained except by the highest categories ("Flower in the crannied wall"). If anything in the universe were mere mechanism or mere dead

matter, Hegel would despair of God and of the spiritual life of man. The plain working category of the lower ranges of thought leads *somewhere* to contradiction; and the contradiction pushes us onwards and upwards. This grading of categories permits Hegel and Hegelians to treat much current opinion as "true in a sense," or "true from a certain point of view," but "in a deeper sense false." It provides further that we should arrange all categories in a certain orderly sequence. We do not pass directly to the highest, when a lower form of thought reveals its limitations; we try the next in order—the limitation detected is supposed to force us precisely into the next phase of thought.

If coexistent parts of the system of reality are successive stages in our conception of the whole, still we must not think that this succession has primarily anything to do with *time*. When the philosophy of Spirit introduces us to the study of history, we find the categories taken up one after another at successive periods—partly in the history of mankind as a race, more clearly in the history of philosophies, or—the two statements have the same meaning for Hegel—of *philosophy*. In themselves, or in the *Logic*, thoughts cannot be temporally prior and posterior. As well inquire whether the north pole of a magnet is cause of its south pole! One thought ideally implies the other—makes room for it—passes into it—always ideally.

A special source of perplexity is Hegel's habit of returning upon a lower category whenever he finds it convenient to do so. If the categories are successive definitions of the universe of reality, we expect that we shall be done with the lower category (*at least as*

applied to the whole of things) when we reach the higher—the higher, which *ex hypothesi* includes in itself all that was true in the lower. But Hegel pays no respect to any such inference. His point of view is briefly defined in his writings (against Spinoza or equally against Schelling) as a belief that reality is “not [a] substance but [a] subject.” Yet he astonishes his reader by treating reality again and again as “substance,” even after the definition “subject” has been announced and argued for. It is as if he defined reality as “substance” *qua* real, natural, material, and as “subject” *qua* ideal. Instead of “not substance but subject,” he seems to allow himself now to affirm “not only substance but also subject.” He seems to perceive no distinction between these two formulas. This is a specimen of the extraordinary and licentious logical laxity which we find in Hegel side by side with much delicate and even hair-splitting work. What do we gain by arranging the categories in a fixed order (as definitions of the real whole) if they not merely survive in their children but walk as ghosts? The precedence is not much more serious than that observed in walking out of a drawing-room at a dinner party. Some go sooner, others later; but all go to the same table. Successive phases in Hegel are co-ordinate aspects, and co-ordinate aspects are successive phases. He who supersedes another is before very long himself superseded. Does the mere *order* in which the phases occur matter very much? Taking everything together—remembering that (1) the lower category does not fully explain even its own department, and that (2) the lower category may be called on when convenient to explain features in the highest department—one doubts whether

Hegel's apparatus of grading is much better than sleight-of-hand. He may not have tricked us over it, but he has secured to himself every facility for doing so. Hegel imperils his profound conception of reality as a system when he seeks to justify it in this fashion. And yet we shall need some such grading—we may say, if we like, some such evolution; but we must remember that the Hegelian evolution is not an evolution in time.

Hegel shows us therefore different thoughts passing into each other in a bewildering procession. "At last they heard the fairy say 'Attention, children. Are you never going to look at me again?' . . . They looked,—and both of them cried out at once, 'Oh, who are you after all?' 'You are our dear Mrs. Doasyou-wouldbedoneby'—'No, you are good Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid; but you are grown quite beautiful now.' 'To you,' said the fairy, 'but look again.' 'You are Mother Cary,' said Tom, in a very low, solemn voice; for he had found out something which made him very happy, and yet frightened him more than all he had ever seen. 'But you are grown quite young again.' 'To you,' said the fairy. 'Look again.' . . . And when they looked she was neither of them, and yet all of them at once." Hegel, too, has a magic show; and he is the fairy who says from time to time, *Look again*.¹ Or Hegel is like a crystal gazer. The ordinary eye can see nothing where he looks; but he reports to us the whole universe in miniature. Or Hegel is like Hamlet studying the

¹ Kingsley's *Water Babies*.—This parable must not be taken in the sense of ordinary Pantheism. The various thoughts (for Hegel) are not merely identical but different, and their differences require us to take them in a certain fixed order.

clouds. "Do you see yonder cloud, that's almost in shape of a camel? By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.—Methinks it is like a weasel.—It is backed like a weasel.—Or, like a whale?—Very like a whale . . . (They fool me to the top of my bent)." The seer compels one to recognise the shapes that he reports. He forces upon us each identification that his nimbler fancy arrives at. Till he told us of them, we should never have framed any such thoughts. Or Hegel's system is like a kaleidoscope—a very colourless kaleidoscope, peopled by the living atoms of pure thought. A turn and another turn and another turn give us unexpected rearrangements. According to Hegel, there is no one who turns the machine—Hegel himself would be shocked at the thought of doing so—how dare he thrust his own subjective opinions into such high and holy company? The machine is self-moved; there is a spirit in it; its name is Thought or the Universe. By their own necessity—and in a definite sequence—the patterns rearrange themselves and melt into each other.

A further consequence of Hegel's method is that, while we affirm the different phases as coexistent aspects, we are never able to bring them together. Thus, *e.g.*, he cannot tell us what we derive respectively from ethics and from æsthetics. Each has its place; each yields its place. The monotonous alternation of praise and blame never pauses. There are no results in any department which are not at the mercy of a slightly deeper analysis.

Or, if there is any qualification to be attached to this statement, it must refer to the highest stage in philosophy—that "absolute knowledge" which closes alike the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopædia*. So far, Hegel

has introduced us to nothing definitive. For a moment it might seem that we had a rock to build on; the next moment Hegel had proved that our supposed rock was the usual old quicksand. But where does Hegel himself stand? From what point of view can he work, if no point of view has more than evanescent validity? It is like the endeavour to apply the historic method to one's self. Even the most convinced advocate of relativity and limitation in man's moral outlook must hesitate to handle his own beliefs and principles upon historic methods. For himself, his beliefs must be ultimate. He knows that they are only an approximation; but, being a limited and finite mind, he is compelled ordinarily to suppress that consideration. *Absolute knowledge* is the one portion of Hegel's system which does not pass away. While other parts seem to be stages in "appearance," this, which has no master over it, looks like "reality." Here we find one of the gravest arguments in support of the opinion that Hegel's position is Pantheistic. Other things *are* and *are not*; this *is* and *abides*—this vision of perfected logical insight, without beauty or love or goodness—this unclothed skeleton of abstract system.

Probably Hegel takes pleasure in regarding reality as a sequence of phases because in this way he seems better able to vindicate its unity. As long as one is dealing with co-ordinate aspects, the unity of the Real seems little more than a name. Like the thing-with-many-qualities, like the Substance which, according to Agnosticism, is unknown, though every one of its many attributes may be known, reality is left ununified when we affirm *many* aspects in *one* Real. We have done nothing more than contradict ourselves, or render ex-

plicit the antinomy which is implicitly present everywhere. If, on the other hand, aspect yields to aspect or passes into aspect, then unity is safe. The transformations of the Notion,¹ in the course of its ideal evolution, provide equally for unity and for difference. If we reject this ingenious suggestion and fall back upon co-ordinate aspects, we ought to recognise what we are doing. We are setting limits to the human mind. We are recognising that for us it is impossible fully to solve the problems constituted by the nature of our thought. Our thought relates to each other a group of aspects which we *know* or *believe* to be unified in the Absolute; but—unless by some trick like Hegel's—we cannot expound this unity from our standing-ground as finite intelligences.

This idea of successive phases really involves the next point, namely, Hegel's principle of progress by contradiction. For the phases exclude each other. When one comes, another goes. Those at two removes may resemble each other (though of course they likewise differ); exclusion—sharp exclusion—is the only relation conceived or permitted between adjacent phases.

III. Reality is a system, or a union, or a unity of *opposites*. Sometimes this is proved by showing one phase *pass into* its contradictory; at other times proof is offered that the thing as it stands is *self-contradictory*. The latter is the more formidable argument; the former is Hegel's favourite method of statement. In discovering this alleged law, Hegel thinks that he has put his finger upon the very pulse of reality. It is in the light of this supposed law that he

¹ See below.

feels able to reconstruct the universe in a system of "*a priori*" [i.e. necessary] thought—he uses the phrase at times. Once again we must recognise that even here Hegel is not the solemn trifler whom the vulgar take him to be. Most of us are ignorant of the contradictions that lurk in our thought—as ignorant as the men of Athens were in the days of Socrates. Kant has taught us that, wherever Time and Space are ruling "forms" of perception, there we shall encounter contradictions. Every part refers us for an explanation of it to other parts; and the process is endless; we can never reach a whole, and, until we do, we seem to have reached nothing. Hegel proposes not merely to generalise contradiction as significant of the *finite*—a conception possibly wider than the *material* world of Time and Space,—he takes contradiction to be the movement of the Absolute. If science as ordinarily studied under conditions of Time and Space fails to satisfy the mind—if finite explanations fail us—must we not supplement them by the "speculative"¹ explanations which philosophy supplies? We must grasp both explanations as one system or one process. We must conceive finite nature, with all its contradictions, as the expression of absolute thought or reason, yet as the opposite of absolute reason; and we must conceive that absolute thought fulfils itself by constantly passing into the finite and constantly rising above it. To Hegel, therefore, contradiction is not merely the law of the finite but the law of the absolute. The latter contradicts itself by producing the finite, and the finite, urged by the burden of its own contradictions, ultimately

¹ Almost entirely a term of praise. It does not imply among Hegelians less certainty in the result, but more capacity in the method.

returns in thought [*i.e.* in man, or—in Hegel this is almost an equivalent— in philosophy] to the repose of the Absolute. The contradiction, if never healed, is always healing—it is not Hegel who believes in the “inbecility” of a “reason” which makes opposite assertions and then sits down in despair and cries out for “faith.” If always with us, but yet always healing, contradiction upon a large view (it is claimed) may be described as always healed.

“For an ye heard a music like snow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.”¹

When you paint a figure portrait, you give it a background—perhaps a conventional red curtain or a vaguer grey cloud; or perhaps a little bit of pre-Raphaelite landscape. Ideally, the whole earth and indeed the whole boundless universe lies in the background; but you ignore that. The most realistic of artists must select and conventionalise; he is painting one man—not the universe. Kant's method is to bring into clearer consciousness the shrouded background of knowledge. We live in moments, do we? But every moment is a focus of all eternity and all immensity. Knowledge is a connectedness between the fragmentary “now” and the whole of existence. Hegel more boldly—and surely also more paradoxically—tries to show that “the instant grows eternity.” The part is more than a part—it is a phase or embodiment of the whole. In the successive transformations which it undergoes in the laboratory of thought, it becomes its background. Indeed, it becomes everything. It generates the whole

¹ This is precisely the Idealist gospel—*valent quantum*.

universe of the possible and the actual. For you treat it (being a part) as if it were the whole; and then you strike upon limits and upon self-contradictions which give you no rest till you know "what God and what man is." The part involves the whole; this is proved since, if you take the part by itself, you treat as a [or as the] whole.

The contradictory nature attributed to thought (or to reality) may be elucidated by the law that the knowledge of opposites is the same,¹ or by the principle of reaction in the historical development of thought. But in Hegel it stands above such helps. We may think it a doubtful way of defending the idea of system or the idea of gradation. Hegel thinks it a luminous certainty, precious for itself independently of its applications. He thinks it gives him a *living* universe in contrast to a universe of fossil forms. It is merely sensuous thought, or merely subjective thinking, he tells us, which confronts things with each other in hard isolation. Speculative thought sees the differences vanish in a higher synthesis as fast as they emerge. Everything is a stage—and a fleeting stage; nothing is more than a stage. Each flashes or flickers into sight for a moment, and then is gone. Everything is true, in a sense, and everything is false from a higher point of view; and there is no possible way of reaching the higher truth except by the mediation of lower and false beliefs. Truth is the synthesis of all possible half-truths. Truth is the result reached when we have been tossed from aspect to aspect until we are thrust into the very heart of things. If you try to go straight

¹ "The relation to its opposite or negative is the one essential relation out of which a thought cannot be forced."—Dr. E. Caird, *Hegel*, p. 162.

to the centre, it evades you. Second thoughts—or possibly rather “third, which are a ripier first”—are the best. First thoughts, simply because they come first, cannot possibly be more than a rough one-sided sketch of the reality of things. The aspects of truth come to us in a definite sequence; but finality is impossible, unless in absolute philosophy, or perhaps in the totality of the process of the universe; and the latter Hegel himself might admit is not accessible to human reason—only (if God is personal) to the Divine.

Hegel thinks that he establishes the *necessary connection* of things by following this rule, or that, by means of it, things develop their own inner nature in the Hegelian philosophy, which thus fulfils the ideal of science strictly so called. Few moderns will admit this bold claim. It was Hegel's great resource against the subjectivity of Schelling, and if we distrust it we regard Hegel himself as subjective and arbitrary. In fact, if we reject the dialectic, we might describe Hegel as an essayist. The essayist is one who, without much inductive gathering of materials, exhibits an unusual degree of insight in dealing with commonly known facts. When Mr. Bosanquet tells us that “Hegel's writing” is “attractive chiefly by the force and freshness of its detail,”¹ he is praising Hegel as an essayist. The distinctive quality of science is a rigorous method. Hegel's dialectic claims to be “scientific” in the highest sense; if we reject the claim, we do not necessarily reject everything in Hegel, but we reduce his merits to those of one who says various “foreible” and “fresh” things “in detail,” as good essayists do.

And it is hard for us to trust Hegel's “science.” We

¹ *Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art*, Translator's Preface, p. vi.

feel sure that so great a master of thought can produce plausible and impressive reasons *ad libitum* for identifying any A with any B—or again for regarding any A as the contradictory of any B. There seems intolerable laxity in Hegel's view of what constitutes one term the negative of its fellow. Just when scientific rigour was most essential—just when Hegel, in criticising Schelling, felt the need of rigour—he has flung us a brilliant literary paradox. One is tempted to transfer to Hegel his own parable of the painter who has only two colours on his palette. From all the infinitely varied and delicately graded relations of the Real, Hegel picks out merely two—bare identity and absolute contrast. He does not simply refer existence to these two co-ordinates, but *treats diagonal movement alternately as horizontal and as perpendicular*. The law of negativity is surely *Vorstellung* and not *Begriff* at all. Each negative in Hegel is supposed to be a definite negative and therefore to involve progress onwards. The logical statement does not fairly imply this. It could yield nothing but a barren alternation of + and — signs. Some other force than that of logic must have fixed the definite direction which thought follows. We must indeed remember a further point. Hegel does not propose to dispense us from the trouble of studying his transitions in detail, although he names a general law. On the contrary, he insists that a system is not a system or a science except in its detail. And in developing his details he reveals an embarrassing fertility of mind; his method never shrinks into a schematic formalism as does the method of many of his expounders. We may restate then his position as affirming objective necessity, based on the contents of

any thought, for passing from it to another and a more satisfying thought.

The working out of the alleged principle of contradiction in Hegel is singular. The old logic of consistency assumes that whatever is self-contradictory is self-refuted or self-condemned. This position seems to be enthroned once more in the recent writings of thinkers who are or have been Hegelians—Mr. Bradley and Professor Royce. Mr. M'Taggart, again, with his usual effort to rationalise Hegel [for the "understanding"?] insists that even Hegel himself is faithful to the test. There *would be* contradiction, if no "higher unity" emerged as the deeper truth, reconciling seeming opposition; it emerges, however, and staves off the deadlock. Popular opinion goes to the opposite extreme from Mr. M'Taggart, thinking of Hegel as the man who legitimated contradiction, and hailed it as the native law of thought. Here, as so often both views seem to be right. Here, as in so many other cases, Hegel meets the "Either—or of the ordinary consciousness" with a supercilious "Both, if you please." "Yes, or No?" they ask of him; he answers *Yes, and No*. Things including contradictions do exist. Everything includes contradictions. But the contradictions are not unrelieved; for everything gives rise to a higher thing, where that which at a lower stage was contradictory is shown to us merged in unity. Accordingly, Hegel's attitude towards the logical test of non-contradiction is rather complex. He does not simply defy it, as is generally supposed. He is not frankly faithful to it, as Mr. M'Taggart boldly contends. What Hegel really holds is that, when you discover a contradiction, you are forced to regard that in which it inheres as an

inferior phase of reality, and that you must discover its proximate neighbour in a phase of reality where the contradiction in question disappears. Having made that discovery, however, you have legitimated both phases—they are co-ordinate aspects of the real; provided always you subordinate A to B as lower to higher. If Hegel, *e.g.*, subordinates morality to religion, he does not deny morality. He only—as he supposes—*sees past it*.

IV. For completeness of statement we should be bound to introduce a fourth definition—*Reality is the work of Thought*. It is undesirable, however, to attempt here any dealing with this doctrine of Hegel's. The position may even be held that it does not add anything fresh to the three affirmations already reviewed—Reality is a system; Reality is a system of various grades; Reality is a system which unites opposites. The new position—the idealist definition—undoubtedly affects *the way in which Hegel conceives* all his affirmations. For example, it is in the light of Hegel's idealist view of the real that our second point—reality as a graded system—has come under our notice in a different and perplexing form—reality as serial. While there are precedents in antiquity for a doctrine of Idealism, the emphasis laid upon *thought* as a guide to the nature of reality is very modern. From Kant in particular Hegel inherits the assertion fully developed, yet burdened with a sceptical gloss. Kant holds that the world of our knowledge is a creation of thought; yet he thinks it the unreal construction of the thought of individual men, all working similarly, but none of them attaining truth. Hegel seeks to dismiss this sceptical interpretation, and to state reality as being

(necessarily) that which thought produces, conceives, or apprehends.

After we have glanced at the teachings of Hegel's idealist forerunners, and after we have given a short sketch of his external life and of the doctrines of his British followers, we must proceed to study in detail the way in which Hegel seeks to make good his view of [the Absolute, or] Reality. Last of all we must seek to deal with the difficulties inherent in the subject. Did Hegel's idealism mean that *nothing but thought exists*? Did it mean simply that *nothing exists except what is in accordance with thought*? ("The real is the rational"; "reality is rational and righteous") Did it mean that *nothing exists except thinkers*? Or did Hegel attempt in some way to combine two or all of these views? These and kindred questions must for the present be postponed. They will engage our attention later.

CHAPTER III

REMOTER ANTECEDENTS.—PLATO, ARISTOTLE, SPINOZA

THE name Idealism carries us back beyond modern philosophy, by its suggestions and affinities, if not in strictness by its personal history. Plato, to whom it points, is the father of all idealists, and Hegel more than any other modern takes up the task of speculation on the grand lines upon which Plato and Aristotle worked. The very word *idea* was introduced into philosophy by Plato; and for centuries it was used in tolerably strict adherence to his lead. Descartes, according to Sir William Hamilton,¹ broke down that usage for the first time, and Locke soon after was criticised in England because of the novelty attaching both to language and thought in his "new way of ideas." Hence it came about that ideas, from being eternal and lofty archetypes of all reality, were degraded in Hume's philosophy to the rank of decaying sensations, faintly surviving in memory. Hence, too, it has come about that moderns are accustomed to associate idealism² with

¹ Reid, pp. 925, 926.

² The derivative terms are late of appearing in our language. The Oxford Dictionary quotes Norris of Benetton for "idealist" — in the Platonic sense — but gives "idealism" as an almost modern importation from the French.

doctrines like Berkeley's and in a lesser degree like Malebranche's (if hardly like Fichte's genuine teaching)—with subjective idealisms that assert the reality of minds and deny the reality of matter. Kant himself, the father of a new and subtle type of idealism, called by him "critical" or "transcendental," propounds something which he regards as a "refutation of idealism"¹ in the subjective or Berkeleyan sense; but Kant in his turn is marked with the same nickname by Hegel, and has subjective idealism imputed to him.² It follows that opposite types of thought have been described by the same name, and that we may well find ourselves at the mercy of perverse associations if we study Hegel's "absolute idealism" expecting to find in it some modification of Berkeley. We may fare better if we look for some further unfolding of the thought of Plato.

Plato's master, Socrates, is praised by Aristotle as having introduced the arts of "induction and definition." These methods, however, were applied by Socrates in a narrowly if deeply practical spirit; and even in ethics he, the first to call himself "philosopher," was conscious of being a "seeker of truth" rather than its possessor.³ Thus "philosopher," like "essay," though it soon became an ambitious and aspiring title, was

¹ In the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

² Wallace's translation of *Logic*, ed. 1, pp. 76, 77—in contrast with "absolute idealism"—is that the first coinage of the latter term! Dr. Harris (*Hegel's Logic*, p. 57) tells us that the phrases "subjective idealist" and "objective idealist" were used by Hegel in a review article in 1801.

³ Contrast the Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology* (p. vi), which calls on us to "advance to science or actual knowledge and lay aside the old name of love for knowledge" [the amateurishness of such an attitude!].

modestly intended on its first introduction; nor should we rightly interpret Socrates' modesty as part of his irony. Still, face to face with the blindness of traditional custom and the bewilderment caused by its decay, Socrates, with all his self-distrust, endeavoured to find some clear guiding light of principle. And, over-against the arbitrariness and selfishness which he and Plato traced in the methods of the Sophists, he set up the thought of binding rules for the art of human life.

What Socrates recognised as man's hope and his need in practical affairs, Plato carried into all the regions of speculation. He adopted at the same time a more positive tone. To trace rationality in the world around was not with him a mere postulate or duty of the human mind; it was the natural, necessary, trustworthy working of thought. Things could be elucidated and defined. It was necessary to classify them. Things were nothing at all if they did not embody in themselves thoughts or ideas. One escaped from error to truth, from non-being to reality, when one grasped the idea behind the phenomenon. Sense, no doubt, was as shifting and baffling as Heraclitus could assert; but sense was not everything. Even in things of sense there were ideas, and we could reach them. The thesis of the first idealism was very much what Mr. McTeggart regards as the thesis of Hegel's idealism, that "reality is" both "rational and righteous."¹ The proof of Plato's idealism, we may say, is simply this, that things will fall naturally into classes; but the ancient world did not ask for proof so hungrily as does the modern world. It asked for a satisfactory answer to the question, Where or what is the Real?

¹ *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, p. 129.

This philosophy, so roughly indicated, is only a beginning of speculative thought; and Plato left it vaguer than he need have done, because the artist in him tended to encroach upon the philosopher. More strictly, a shortcoming on the speculative field itself is the dualistic element in the system. Plato's ideas explain much—but not everything. There is an irrational element blended with them somehow in the constitution of reality. By necessity the real always falls short of the ideal type. The Platonic doctrine of immortality shows us this dualistic element with startling plainness. The dualistic strain stands in contrast with Hegel's Monism, and perhaps also with the character of Hegel's idealism as absolute.¹ It may be held, however, that Hegel's own doctrine of material "contingency" has close affinity with Plato's Heraclitean view of sense.² Again, Plato's ideas are practically left standing side by side without manifest interconnexion. It is not that Plato failed to see that they ought to be connected. As visionary or poet, he believed they were related; as thinker, he could not carry out his programme in detail. One thing he never tried. Being an ancient and not a modern, he did not group the ideas as contents of a divine consciousness. This was not done until Neo-Platonism adopted the Logos doctrine and passed into contact with Jewish and Christian thought; since then it has been a commonplace of ancient and modern Christian Platonism. When Plato himself connects the ideas with one an-

¹ *Logic*, 1st ed. of Translation, p. 79; compare Mr. M'Taggart, *as above*, p. 69.

² I find this view advanced by Professor Ritchie, *Darwin and Hegel*, p. 57.